



Center for Medicaid and State Operations/Survey and Certification Group

**Ref: S&C04-02**

**DATE:**       **October 9, 2003**

**TO:**           Survey and Certification Regional Office Management (G-5)  
                  State Survey Agency Directors

**FROM:**       Acting Director  
                  Survey and Certification Group

**SUBJECT:**    Use of Mapping to Determine Rural Eligibility for Rural Health Clinics

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of revised procedures for determining whether a Rural Health Clinic (RHC) is located outside an urbanized area and therefore potentially eligible to apply for RHC status.

To be eligible for RHC certification, a provider must be located outside an urbanized area as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Ordinarily, the state would contact the Bureau of the Census Regional Offices (RO) or Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) ROs to determine whether the clinic is located in a non-urbanized area. However, we have created the option for the state or RO to verify rural eligibility using Census Bureau boundary files currently available to the public. With these files we are able to locate the boundaries of all census 2000 Urbanized Areas (UA) using the Microsoft Excel application. The UA maps are downloaded into the Excel program where they enable the user to easily determine whether the provider is within or outside an urbanized area. Zip codes appear as dots on the maps and are readily discernible as being inside or outside a defined UA.

This process should be used to determine whether a RHC area is considered non-urbanized and therefore potentially eligible to apply for RHC status. CMS Central Office (CO) will maintain a database of all current RHCs that will be updated quarterly by the ROs and forwarded to CO.

We expect that this new process will allow states and ROs better control over rural eligibility determinations, and be able to help us set more defined program standards, identify program needs, and provide for effective, timely completion of verifications.

The mapping process using Excel has been piloted in RO 6 and presented for review at the recent national RHC training. We are now prepared to begin training in the ROs. Each RO must have a representative available for one-on-one training starting November 3, 2003. The representative should be able to use Excel and be the RHC lead or able to work closely with the RO RHC lead.

A master CD will be forwarded to all ROs to use for verification of rural eligibility. The ROs should input new RHCs in the database and forward the information to CO on a quarterly basis. The state agency representative will contact the RO to obtain eligibility status. Alternatively, state agency personnel may also be trained to use this mapping process.

For questions concerning this policy, please contact Jacquelyn Kosh-Suber at (410) 786-0618 or via E-mail at [Jkoshsuber@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:Jkoshsuber@cms.hhs.gov).

**Effective Date:** Immediately.

**Training:** The information contained in this announcement should be shared with all survey and certification staff, their managers, and the state/RO training coordinator.

/s/  
Thomas E. Hamilton

cc: RHC Regional Office Contacts